

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

OF
POPULAR

LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND ART

Fifth Series

ESTABLISHED BY WILLIAM AND ROBERT CHAMBERS, 1832

CONDUCTED BY R. CHAMBERS (SECUNDUS)

No. 101.—VOL. II.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 5, 1885.

PRICE 1½d.

LORD TOLLEMACHE'S COTTAGE-FARMS.

BY A SPECIAL REPORTER.

THE present condition of British agriculture is an anxious one for all concerned, the landlords, the farmers, the labourers, and the nation as a whole. Everywhere, the old system is in process of modification, and all sorts of experiments are being suggested and tried. In the multitude of counsellors there is both wisdom and folly. Some advocate the re-creation of the old yeomen; others are eager to foster peasant proprietors; others, again, urge co-operation among the labourers. Doubtless, all these methods of dealing with the soil will be tried; and it is well that they should; for only actual trial, over a sufficiently long period, will prove or disprove the fitness of the methods. The present phase of agricultural depression is not confined to England; it is more or less acute throughout Europe; America has its own special share of it; Asia and Africa and Australasia are by no means free from it. This universality of affliction is a grim consolation to British farmers, and it ought to give them courage to bear the trials of a most exceptional period.

Agricultural reformation being unavoidable, it is wise to accept it in a cheerful and hopeful spirit. Bad as the actual state of things is, it might be worse; dark as the immediate future seems to landlords and farmers, it is not wholly indicative of ruin, if both will come to a friendly understanding. While many are vainly contending for the continuance of the old system of tenancy, cultivation, and labour, some have embraced the new order of things with satisfaction to themselves and those associated with them.

Conspicuous among the English landlords who are adapting themselves to the times is Lord Tollemache of Peckforton Castle, Cheshire. He has in his own way solved one of the problems of the hour—that of satisfying the agricultural labourer, for the experiments of Lord Tollemache

have gone on for many years. By the courtesy of his lordship the writer was permitted to visit his cottage-farms, to question the labourers and their wives, to judge from reports and visible facts how the experiments have ended. They are in every respect most encouraging. The landlord is satisfied, the farmers are satisfied, the labourer is satisfied. While dread and perplexity pervade the shires, the happy dwellers upon Lord Tollemache's estates are at peace. Every large farm is occupied; and in case of a vacancy, there are numerous applications. Every labourer's cottage is tenanted; and the obtaining of one is the great object of those living outside. The contrast between these cottages and the ordinary dwelling of the English farm-labourer is striking.

They are mostly built in pairs, and stand each upon about half a rood of garden-land. The windows are large, the structures are substantial, the sanitary details excellent. The living-room is a sort of parlour-kitchen, home-like to a degree, and fitted with all sorts of conveniences for domesticity. Behind, are a scullery and a pantry. There are three bedrooms, one down stairs and two above, which are wholesome and comfortable. Few artisans even of the better class have such homes in our best-built cities. In the rear is a yard for coals, and a large oven for baking the family bread. Regarding this, much was heard in praise from the housewives. Still further in the rear is an outhouse for a cow and a calf; also a capital piggery. These buildings are so constructed as to facilitate dairy operations as much as possible. Adjacent to the dwelling is a little croft of land of about three acres. At the time of the writer's visit, a goodly haystack adorned a corner of each croft, showing that the grass-crop had been a good one. In each croft, a cow was feeding upon a pasture which the autumn had not much thinned. Although many of the cows did not appear to be of a very illustrious race, they were in capital condition and are good milkers. No doubt the breeds will be improved as time goes on, for 'advance' is the standing order of the community.

As far as possible, each cottage-farm has its pasture adjacent. But where the symmetry of the large farms prevents this, or where it is beneficial to the tenants to be associated in a larger pasture, modifications are made. On one part of the estate were three cows in a triangular meadow. Their owners 'bone' and fertilise the land in common; they also mow and make the hay in the same manner. From inquiry, it appeared that this joint system was rather objected to by the labourers; each likes to be lord of his own little place and to keep neighbours on the other side of the hedge. But though feelings run in this unsocial groove, the associated tenants fully appreciate the advantages that Lord Tollemache offers to them. Not one would have given up his cow and pasture; on the contrary, all were grateful for the privileges they enjoyed. In the neighbourhood of the castle many cows are pastured in the park. These variations in the cottage-farm system show its flexibility to all the conditions. The primary object is to give every labourer the opportunity to keep a cow; and that object is attained. The rent of cottage and three acres of land is ten pounds per annum.

The labourer and his wife are not heavily burdened by the work of their little farm. Both are skilled in dairy operations; if they have a family, the care of the cow and pigs adds but little to the toil of life. There were no evidences of over-worked men; and the vivacity of the women and children proved that they were living pleasantly. As an average, the labourer pays his entire rent-charge out of the profits of his farm. Besides, he has ample supplies of dairy produce and bacon. The generality of cottagers make butter of their surplus milk; it is of a good quality, though inferior to the delicate butter made by the Dutch and Danish small farmers. In time this stigma ought to be removed, as there is no reason for the inferiority save want of care. The cattle and the pastures of these Cheshire dairymen are superior to those of Holland and Denmark. If the rising generation were taught the art of butter-making by an expert from some of the agricultural colleges, and if prizes were given by Lord Tollemache for first-class butter, the improvement of quality would soon add to the income of the cottagers. Small industries of this kind can only hope for high success on *quality*.

Some few small farmers convert their milk into cheese, which is the special product of the district. But the ordinary Cheshire cheese is of great size, and many small farms must combine to make them profitably. And the makes of this sort have no chance to rank high. Cheshire cheese, unless of the super-excellent kind, has not the reputation that it formerly had. In their struggle with adverse times, many farmers have gone in for quantity, and have attempted to compete with common American makes, instead of working on the old system. This foolish attempt has done much harm to cheese-makers in general; and bitter are the complaints heard in every dairy and market-place that Cheshire cheese is falling out of esteem. It will be further injured by the introduction of the poorly made cheeses of small farmers.

In establishing cottage-farmers upon his estates,

Lord Tollemache had three ends in view. The first was, to satisfy the natural and praiseworthy desire of the labourers to have a cow, and land to maintain it. The second was, to train the rising generation of labourers' children in dairying and agricultural pursuits from infancy. That can only be done when the household is engaged in the tending of animals and the cultivation of the soil. The offspring of rural labourers, who have no home but a hovel in a village or in the grimy suburb of a manufacturing town, are rather repelled from rustic pursuits than won to them. Cut off from intercourse with farm-life, owning nothing that depends upon their care, either in garden, field, or stall, the labourer's family as they grow up go into the ranks of town artisans or those of the rudest toilers. The spectacle of their father's continued drudgery at low wages, his discontent with a hard lot that is without hope of amelioration, repel them from following the paternal occupation. In another fifty years, the country would be denuded of labourers, if the alarming migration to the towns went on at the same ratio as during the past fifty years. But that is not the whole mischief—the labourer is deteriorating. Complaints are heard on every side that farm-servants are not so useful as their parents were. They are careless, restless, eager for amusement; and higher wages but intensify their failings. This is an *ex parte* judgment, it is true; and as farmers have got into the habit of thinking dismally upon all things connected with their business, they may paint the labourer in darker colours than he deserves. Still, no one doubts that our rural toilers are different from their sires; and it is the duty of great landowners to prevent the deterioration and discontent of a class that plays so indispensable a part in the national welfare.

Lord Tollemache has intervened to save the old English labourer from extinction, and he has the satisfaction of having done it admirably well. The labourers upon his extensive Cheshire estates are markedly superior to those of their class in most counties. Their wives are robust, their children unusually intelligent, and the social atmosphere of the neighbourhood is exhilarating. In every house visited, the furniture was good and excellently cared for. Neatness and cleanliness were evidently habitual; and from these habitations will proceed a race of farm boys and girls that will add to the moral and material prosperity of England.

Public-houses are to be found in the hamlets, but they receive little custom from the cottagers, and are closed during Sunday. Encouraged in thrift, the community waste very little upon drink. When the labourer has finished his day's work, he has always some little job to do about his farm. His interests and ambitions fence him off from vice. When he finds time to smoke his evening pipe, he leans upon his garden gate and looks at the boundaries of his croft, wishing that they might be expanded. He would like another acre or two, another cow, and a few more pigs. He is winning at the game of life, and is encouraged to go on.

It is just upon this point that Lord Tollemache and his cottage-farmers are divided in opinion. The labourer wants more land, believing that he could manage an extra acre or two with very little

more exertion. Lord Tollemache thinks that three acres are quite as much as the labourer can control, and that if the holdings were to be enlarged, the scheme would be liable to miscarry. And his lordship is perhaps right. Under the present system, the labourer stands firmly upon his little enterprise. If his cow dies, he is not ruined, merely impoverished for a time. If the hay-crop is a failure, he simply makes no profit for a season. Backed up by his weekly wages, he can pull through difficulties inherent in his farming venture. In proportion as he extended his scale of operations, he would extend his risks of disaster. Further, if the labourer were to embark upon larger undertakings, he would be less efficient as an employee. No man can serve two masters, even though one of them be himself. If the labourer's farm were extended to six acres, his mind would be dwelling upon his own cattle and crops instead of those of his master; and the extra toil would prevent him from doing his work as well as at present. Of course, labourers with growing families of half-a-dozen handy children might get on very well. But it is necessary to deal with average conditions in cottage-farming as in all other things, in building up a system. For the labourer, as a labourer, the three-acre farm is both the maximum and minimum, the 'happy mean' of our agricultural method. As he is, the labourer has all that a man in his position can obtain—a comfortable refined home, a pleasant and facile means to employ his leisure and savings; neither too much work nor too little; and last and greatest, the opportunity to bring up his family healthfully, usefully, and happily.

The third object Lord Tollemache had in view in establishing cottage-farms was the supply of high-class labourers for his large tenant-farmers. This has been done; and it is the proud boast of the neighbourhood that the labourers on the Tollemache estates are unexcelled in England. As the district is exclusively devoted to dairying, the labourers need to be smart and capable in handling cattle, quick to observe any symptoms of sickness among them, and so adapted to their dumb charges as to obtain the highest results in tending them. Many of the large farms milk sixty to seventy cows, and make one cheese, weighing from seventy to ninety pounds, per day. Milking is, therefore, a most important operation, and must be done quickly to be done well. On some of the farms the labourers' wives assist at this, for which they receive payment in coin, food, and milk. Some labourers are partly fed by their employers. The wages are from sixteen to seventeen shillings a week on a yearly average; and with the other emoluments in kind, bring up the pay to something near twenty shillings a week. Add to this the profits of the cottage-farm and the earnings of wives and children, and it will be seen that the Tollemache labourers are among the most fortunate of their class. A process of natural selection has gone on until they have become the *élite* of their craftsmen. When death or other cause makes a vacancy in their ranks, there is an eager rush from the outside to get the coveted cottage-farm and all the other advantages connected with it. Not only is the pay of the labourers exceptionally good, the work is easy to a degree unknown to other dairy districts.

Lord Tollemache is a reformer of the all round sort, and the proofs of it are as striking in the large farm-steadings as in the cottages.

In many parts of Cheshire, the old-style farm still exists. The stockyard befouled with litter, from which trickle unsavoury and unsightly streams at all seasons. A hideous mass of manure fills the centre or a corner; untidiness, clumsiness, and squalor are the rule. These unpleasant objects form the foreground of the picture, visible from the farm-kitchen or parlour. Dirt and disorder prevail. Lord Tollemache has indeed changed all that. His farmhouses resemble manor-houses, hunting-boxes, squire-like homesteads, anything but the ancient Cheshire farmer's home. Where the manure-heap once stood is now a beautiful green grass plot, fit for tennis or other similar games. The house is fronted by a garden, filled with flowers of every kind, and tended with loving care by the women of the house. Within it are the comforts, the elegances, and the refinements that one finds in the villas of St John's Wood or other æsthetic middle-class tenements. Only in some of the wealthy farmers' houses in America has the writer seen so many charming things as in the Tollemache cheese-makers' dwellings. Exteriorly and interiorly, a transformation has taken place that is hard to realise as having happened in half a generation.

The milking of seventy cows is an interesting sight; and those who perform the work in these splendid dairy-farms are marvellously apt. In a very short space of time the work is done, and the fragrant fluid is taken to the dairy, where all the devices for saving labour are at hand. Nowhere were evidences seen of those rude labours which exhaust the dairymaid. Machinery spares the muscles, science tells the truth of temperatures, steam cleanses the utensils, and pumps convey the whey by underground conduits to the piggeries. The manufacture of the gigantic Cheshire cheeses is carried on with a quietude and ease that is delightful to witness. No worry, no wasteful bustling; order, precision, exactitude prevail.

Men and women, masters and employees, are singularly different from those who made the famous Cheshire cheeses a while ago. There is a smartness about them that is not rural; they have a width in their thinking that is foreign to the native Cheshire mind; yet they are all children of the soil. They are not living under exceptional circumstances, but have to compete for existence. Cattle-plagues, from the desolating rinderpest to the last lingering troubles of foot-and-mouth disease, have impoverished them enormously. American cheese has hammered down prices to desperation. Spurious butters have kept profits at a low ebb for years; and now milk is down to sevenpence per gallon. Yet Lord Tollemache's tenants are not in arrears; no farms are to let; and if a vacancy happens, it is sought for by scores of farmers, who wait for a chance to come on the ground. Good management, not patronage-philanthropy, is the explanation of Lord Tollemache's success in dealing with his tenants and labouring cottagers.

To each of his tenants, Lord Tollemache gives a lease of twenty-one years at a fixed rent. In case the tenant may wish to vacate his farm,

he is free to do so at any time. But his lordship cannot dismiss the tenant before the expiry of the lease, except for violation of its terms. This compact is the basis upon which the whole system rests. It gives the tenant security against disturbance. He goes into his work with a whole heart. The cottage-farmer becomes possible under such a system; for his employer being secured of his farm, he is secured of his employment; and can apply his savings to his own little undertaking without fear of disturbance.

It may be said that cottage-farms are more likely to succeed in a dairy district than in a purely arable one, and that Lord Tollemache's system is not applicable to the country as a whole. Perhaps not; but at anyrate it is easy for other landlords to make experiments of the same kind under different conditions. Success and failure can only be ascertained by practical methods; and from what has been done in Cheshire and other counties, enough is known to make a *prima facie* case for cottage-farms.

A HOUSE DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF.

BY MRS OLIPHANT.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

LADY MARKHAM was a woman, everybody knew, who never hesitated when she knew a thing to be her duty, especially in all that concerned hospitals and the sick. She appeared by George Gaunt's bedside in the middle of what seemed to him a terrible, long, endless night. It was not yet midnight, indeed; but they do not reckon by hours in the darkness through which he was drifting, through which there flashed upon his eyes confused gleams of scenes that were like scenes upon a stage all surrounded by darkness. The change had come. One of the nurses, the depressed one, thought it was for death; the other, possessed by the excitement of that great struggle, in which sometimes it appears that one human creature can visibly help another to hold the last span of soil on which human foot can stand, stood by the bed, almost carried away by what to her was like the frenzy of battle to a soldier, watching to see where she could strike a blow at the adversary, or drag the champion a hair's-breadth further on the side of victory. There appeared to him at that moment two forms floating in the air—both white, bright, with the light upon them, radiant as with some glory of their own to the gaze of fever. He remembered them afterwards as if they had floated out of the chamber, disembodied, two faces, nothing more; and then all again was night. 'He's talked a deal about his mother, poor gentleman. He'll never live to see his mother,' said the melancholy attendant, shaking her head. 'Hush,' said the other under her breath. 'Don't you know we can't tell what he hears and what he don't hear?' Lady Markham was of this opinion too. She called the doleful woman with her outside the door, and left the last battle to be fought out. Frances stood on the other side of the bed. How she came there, why she was allowed to come, neither she nor any one knew. She stood looking at

him with an awe in her young soul which silenced every other feeling. Nelly Winterbourn had been afraid of death, of seeing or coming near it. But Frances was not afraid. She stood, forgetting everything, with her head thrown back, her eyes expanded, her heart dilating and swelling in her bosom. She seemed to herself to be struggling too, gasping with his efforts for breath, helping him—oh, if she could help him!—saying her simple prayers involuntarily, sometimes aloud. Over and over again, in the confusion and darkness and hurrying of the last battle, there would come to him a glimpse of that face. It floated over him, the light all concentrated in it—then rolling clouds and gloom.

It was nearly morning when the doctor came. 'Still living?'—'Alive; but that is all,' was the brief interchange outside the door. He would have been surprised, had he had any time for extraneous emotions, to see on the other side of the patient's bed, softly winnowing the air with a large fan, a girl in evening dress, pearls gleaming upon her white neck, standing rapt and half unconscious in the midst of the unwonted scene. But the doctor had no time to be surprised. He went through his examination in that silence which sickens the very heart of the lookers-on. Then he said briefly: 'It all depends now on the strength whether we can pull him through. The fever is gone; but he is as weak as water. Keep him in life twelve hours longer, and he'll do.'

Twelve hours!—one whole long lingering endless summer day. Lady Markham, with her own affairs at such a crisis, had not hesitated. She came in now, having got a change of dress, and sent the weary nurse, who had stood over him all night, away. Blessed be fashion, when its fads are for angels' work! Noiselessly into the room came with her, clean, fresh, and cool, everything that could restore. The morning light came softly in, the air from the open windows. Freshness and hope were in her face. She gave her daughter a look, a smile. 'He may be weak, but he has never given in,' she said. Reinforcements upon the field of battle. In a few hours, which were as a year, the hopeful nurse was back again refreshed. And thus the endless day went on. Noon, and still he lived. Markham walked about the little street with his pockets full of small moneys, buying off every costermonger or wandering street vendor of small-wares, boldly interfering with the liberty of the subject, stopping indignant cabs, and carts half paralysed with slow astonishment. It was scarcely necessary, for the patient's brain was not yet sufficiently clear to be sensitive to noises; but it was something to do for him. A whole cycle of wonder had gone round, but there was no time to think of it in the absorbing interest of this. Waring had employed his wife's son to clear off those debts, which, if the old general ever knew of them, would add stings to sorrow—which, if the young man mended, would be a crushing weight round his neck. Waring had done this without a word or look that inferred that Markham was to blame. The age of miracles had come back; but, as would happen, perhaps, if that age did come back, no one had time or

thought to give to the prodigies, for the profounder interest which no wonder could equal, the fight between death and life, the sudden revelation in common life of all the mysteries that make humanity what it is—the love which made a little worldling triumphant over every base suggestion—the pity that carried a woman out of herself and her own complicated affairs, to stand by another woman's son in the last mortal crisis—the nature which suspended life in every one of all these differing human creatures, and half obliterated, in thought of another, all the interests that were their own.

Through the dreadful night and through the endless sunshine of that day, a June day, lavish of light and pleasure, reluctant to relinquish a moment of its joy and triumph, the height of summer days, the old people, the old general and his wife, the father and mother, travelled without pause, with few words, with little hope, daring to say nothing to each other except faint questions and calculations as to when they could be there. When they could be there! They did not put the other question to each other, but within themselves, repeated it without ceasing: Would they be there before—? Would they be there in time?—to see him once again. They scarcely breathed when the cab, blundering along, got to the entrance of a little street, where it was stopped by a wild figure in a gray overcoat, which rushed at the horse and held him back. Then the old general rose in his wrath: 'Drive on, man! drive on. Ride him down, whoever the fool is.' And then, somewhat as those faces had appeared at the sick man's bedside, there came at the cab window an ugly little face, all puckers and light, half recognised as a bringer of good tidings, half hated as an obstruction, saying: 'All right—all right. I'm here to stop noises. He's going to pull through.'

'Mamma,' said Constance next evening, when all their excitement and emotions were softened down, 'I hope you told Mrs Gaunt that I had been there?'

'My dear, Mrs Gaunt was not thinking of either you or me. Perhaps she might be conscious of Frances; I don't know even that. When one's child is dying, it does not matter to one who shows feeling. By-and-by, no doubt, she will be grateful to us all.'

'Not to me—never to me.'

'Perhaps she has no reason, Con,' her mother said.

'I am sure I cannot tell you, mamma. If he had died, of course—though even that would not have been my fault. I amused him very much for six weeks, and then he thought I behaved very badly to him. But all the time I felt sure that it would really do him no harm. I think it was cheap to buy at that price all your interest and everything that has been done for him—not to speak of the experience in life.'

Lady Markham shook her head. 'Our experiences in life are sometimes not worth the price we pay for them; and to make another pay.'

'Oh!' said Constance with a toss of her head, shaking off self-reproach and this mild answer together. 'It appears that there is some post his father wants for him to keep him at home;

and Claude will move heaven and earth—that's to say the Horse Guards and all the other authorities—to get it. Mamma,' she added after a pause, 'Frances will marry him, if you don't mind.'

'Marry him!' cried Lady Markham with a shriek of alarm; 'that is what can never be.'

Meanwhile, Frances was walking back from Mrs Gaunt's lodging, where the poor lady, all tremulous and shaken with joy and weariness, had been pouring into her sympathetic ears all the anguish of the waiting, now so happily over, and weeping over the kindness of everybody—everybody was so kind. What would have happened had not everybody been so kind? Frances had soothed her into calm, and coming downstairs, had met Sir Thomas at the door with his inquiries. He looked a little grave, she thought, somewhat preoccupied. 'I am very glad,' he said, 'to have the chance of a talk with you, Frances. Are you going to walk? Then I will see you home.'

Frances looked up in his face with simple pleasure. She tripped along by his side like a little girl, as she was. They might have been father and daughter smiling to each other, a pretty sight as they went upon their way. But Sir Thomas' smile was grave. 'I want to speak to you on some serious subjects,' he said.

'About mamma? Oh, don't you think, Sir Thomas, it is coming all right?'

'Not about your mother. It is coming all right, thank God, better than I ever hoped. This is about myself. Frances, give me your advice. You have seen a great deal since you came to town. What with Nelly Winterbourn and poor young Gaunt, and all that has happened in your own family, you have acquired what Con calls experience in life.'

Frances' little countenance grew grave too. 'I don't think it can be true life,' she said.

He gave a little laugh, in which there was a tinge of embarrassment. 'From your experience,' he said, 'tell me: would you ever advise, Frances, a marriage between a girl like you—mind you, a good girl, that would do her duty not in Nelly Winterbourn's way—and an elderly rather worldly man?'

'O no, no, Sir Thomas,' cried the girl; and then she paused a little, and said to herself that perhaps she might have hurt Sir Thomas' feelings by so distinct an expression. She faltered a little, and added: 'It would depend, wouldn't it, upon who they were?'

'A little, perhaps,' he said. 'But I am glad I have had your first unbiased judgment.—Now for particulars. The man is not a bad old fellow, and would take care of her. He is rich, and would provide for her, not like that hound Winterbourn.—Oh, you need not make that gesture, my dear, as if money meant nothing; for it means a great deal. And the girl is as good a little thing as ever was born. Society has got talking about it; it has been spread abroad everywhere; and perhaps if it comes to nothing, it may do her harm. Now, with those further lights, let me have your deliverance. And remember, it is very serious—not play at all.'

'I have not enough lights, Sir Thomas. Does

she,' said Frances, with a slight hesitation—'love him? And does he love her?'

'He is very fond of her; I'll say that for him,' said Sir Thomas hurriedly. 'Not perhaps in the boy-and-girl way. And she—well, if you put me to it, I think she likes him, Frances. They are as friendly as possible together. She would go to him, I believe, with any of her little difficulties. And he has as much faith in her—as much faith as in—I can't put a limit to his faith in her,' he said.

Frances looked up at him with the grave judicial look into which she had been forming her soft face. 'All you say, Sir Thomas, looks like a father and child. I would do that to papa—or to you.'

Here he burst, to her astonishment, into a great fit of laughter, not without a little tremor, as of some other feeling in it. 'You are a little Daniel,' he said. 'That's quite conclusive, my dear. O wise young judge, how I do honour thee.'

'But'—Frances cried, a little bewildered. Then she added: 'Well, you may laugh at me if you like. Of course, I am no judge; but if the gentleman is so like her father, cannot she be quite happy in being fond of him, instead of—? O no! Marrying is quite different—quite, quite different. I feel sure she would think so, if you were to ask her, herself,' she said.

'And what about the poor old man?'

'You did not say he was a poor old man; you said he was elderly, which means'—

'About my age.'

'That is not an old man. And worldly—which is not like you. I think, if he is what you say, that he would like better to keep his friend; because people can be friends, Sir Thomas, don't you think, though one is young and one is old?'

'Certainly, Frances—witness you and me.'

She took his arm affectionately of her own accord and gave it a little kind pressure. 'That is just what I was thinking,' she said, with the pleasantest smile in the world.

Sir Thomas took Lady Markham aside in the evening and repeated this conversation. 'I don't know who can have put such an absurd rumour about,' he said.

'Nor I,' said Lady Markham; 'but there are rumours about every one. It is not worth while taking any notice of them.'

'But if I had thought Frances would have liked it, I should never have hesitated a moment.'

'She might not what you call like it,' said Lady Markham dubiously; 'and yet she might'—

'Be talked into it, for her good? I wonder,' said Sir Thomas with spirit, 'whether my old friend, who has always been a model woman in my eyes, thinks that would be very creditable to me?'

Lady Markham gave a little conscious guilty laugh, and then, oddly enough, which was so unlike her—twenty-four hours in a sickroom is trying to any one—began to cry. 'You flatter me with reproaches,' she said. 'Markham asks me if I expect my son to be base; and you ask me how I can be so base myself, being your model woman. I am not a model woman; I

am only a woman of the world, that has been trying to do my best for my own. And look there,' she said, drying her eyes; 'I have succeeded very well with Con. She will be quite happy in her way.'

'And now,' said Sir Thomas after a pause, 'dear friend, who art still my model woman, how about your own affairs?'

She blushed celestial rosy red, as if she had been a girl. 'Oh,' she said, 'I am going down with Edward to the Warren to see what it wants to make it habitable. If it is not too damp, and we can get it put in order—I am quite up in the sanitary part of it, you know—he means to send the Gaunts there with their son to recruit, when he is well enough. I am so glad to be able to do something for his old neighbours. And then we shall have time ourselves, before the season is over, to settle what we shall do.'

The reader is far too knowing in such matters not to be able to divine how the marriages followed each other in the Waring family within the course of that year. Young Gaunt, when he got better, confused with his illness, soothed by the weakness of his convalescence and all the tender cares about him, came at last to believe that the debts which had driven him out of his senses had been nothing but a bad dream. He consulted Markham about them, detailing his broken recollections. Markham replied with a perfectly opaque countenance: 'You must have been dreaming, old man. Nightmares take that form the same as another. Never heard half a word from any side about it; and you know those fellows, if you owed them sixpence and didn't pay, would publish it in every club in London. It has been a bad dream.—But look here,' he added; 'don't you ever go in for that sort of thing again. Your head won't stand it.—I'm going to set you the example,' he said with his laugh. 'Never—if I should live to be a hundred,' Gaunt cried with fervour. The sensation of this extraordinary escape, which he could not understand, the relief of having nothing to confess to the general, nothing to bring tears from his mother's eyes, affected him like a miraculous interposition of God, which no doubt it was, though he never knew how. There was another vision which belonged to the time of his illness, but which was less apocryphal, as it turned out—the vision of those two forms through the mist—of one, all white, with pearls on the milky throat, which had been somehow accompanied in his mind with a private comment, that at last false Duessa being gone for ever, the true Una had come to him. After a while, in the greenness of the Warren, amid the cool shade, he learned to fathom how that was.

But were we to enter into all the processes by which Lady Markham changed from the 'That can never be!' of her first light on the subject, to giving a reluctant consent to Frances' marriage, we should require another volume. It may be enough to say that in after-days, Captain Gaunt—but he was then Colonel—thought Constance a very handsome woman, but could not understand how any one in his senses could consider the wife of Claude Ramsay worthy of a moment's comparison with his own. 'Handsome, yes, no doubt,' he would say; 'and so is

Nelly Markham, for that matter; but of the earth, earthy, or of the world, worldly; whereas Frances'—

Words failed to express the difference, which was one with which words had nothing to do.

THE END.

A CHRISTMAS RIDE IN 1807.

'THE story of the mailcoach, please, grandfather,' says my little great-grandson, when he and his mother spend a short time with me every Christmas-tide.

It is not very much; though to me, at that time a lad of seventeen years, it seemed a good deal; and I like to think of it among other remembrances of days past, after all these years; and sometimes, with an old man's garrulity, to tell it to others besides my great-grandchildren, if I can get any to listen. I am an old man, long past threescore and ten. Born in 1790, ninety-five years are up to this time the days of the years of my pilgrimage; but the circumstances of my story are fresh and clear in my memory.

What changes since my youth! The stage-coaches and their gallant teams gone, never to come back; and the scream of the locomotive now echoes where in my day the horn of the mailcoach guard sounded pleasantly over hill and valley, through country road and village street. But time is up, and now they are ready to start, and we climb into the box seat, for which we have duly paid our fare to Salisbury by the half-past eight night mailcoach from Bristol. The coachman deftly gathers up the reins, the guard winds his horn, and we sally briskly, though carefully, out of the capacious inn-yard in the old town of Bristol, on our way to Salisbury. I was taking this journey for my father, who was in business at Bristol, and was intrusted by him with important papers, to be delivered to a friend at Salisbury. Coach-travelling was not without its dangers; and even at the time of which I am speaking, the remembrance of an occasional highwayman had not died out. But the accident which befell us was not of this sort; and although we were in danger of our lives and limbs, our foes cared nothing for money or valuables; and I believe no stagecoach passenger in England, before or since, ever met with danger from such enemies as ours were on this particular night of the 28th of December 1807. Passing through the narrow streets of old Bristol, we left the town by Temple Gate, where now stands the joint station of the Great Western and Midland Railways, over the winding Avon, through Arno's Vale; peaceful then on that winter night, as now and again the moon shone out between the clouds; peaceful, too, still, with its beautiful cemetery. On five miles, through the little town of Keynsham, little changed these seventy-eight years, where the good people were already going to bed; then through Bath, with its stately terraces and mansions, and on to Melksham, rich in corn-mills and sacking manufactories; then through Devizes—'The Vies,' in the vernacular of the eighteenth century peasants—famous in those days for its malting and brewing. Nothing unusual happened on our journey thus far. We changed horses at the stages, and all went well;

but the circumstances of the rest of the journey were so strange, so 'uncanny,' and the feelings of apprehension and mystery formed in my youthful mind were so strong, that seventy-eight years have not impaired the freshness of them in my memory.

We left Devizes with fresh horses—four bays, splendid animals, nearly thoroughbred; but when about three miles of this stage were passed, all four horses began to show unusual symptoms of unsteadiness, and a strong inclination to slacken speed, till at length they could with difficulty be persuaded to walk, and that slowly, and with frequent dead stops. Our coachman, an old roadster, handed me the reins, and got down. To his great mystification and annoyance, his horses were in a state of nervousness and tremor. The night had now become darker and very cold, with a strong south-easterly wind driving huge black clouds before its snowy breath, and with an occasional break in the clouds, showing a keen bright star, or the young crescent moon jewelled in the deep dark winter sky. The roads were frozen as hard as adamant, and sent back the footfalls of the horses in clear ringing notes. Here and there were slight powderings of recently fallen snow. Our coachman was fairly nonplussed. Never knew such a thing before. Looked about with the guard's lantern—harness and gear all right, and remounted the box and took the reins. The horses for some minutes refused to start, but submitted to be led by the guard and one of the passengers a short distance, when they condescended to walk slowly as before, and nothing more could be got out of them. No amount of whip would avail, and when applied too freely, resulted in a series of sharp kicks from one of the wheelers, much to the alarm of the inside passengers. This state of things went on for some hour and a half, as we dragged slowly along on our way towards Salisbury, in a south-easterly direction—right 'up wind,' as a fox-hunter would say—through a bleak country, sparsely inhabited. We had not passed a roadside house for some miles.

One of the 'outsides' suggested that the Northern Lights might possibly have been the cause of the horses' fright; but though they had been visible at starting, they had entirely disappeared before our present team were put to. This suggestion was not supported. A badger or two had also been seen by the roadside during the lighter intervals of the night; but that was not then very uncommon, and certainly would not account for the condition of our horses. Speculation was useless. A sort of weird influence seemed to be in the air, and none of us felt very lively.

Our next stage was about four miles farther, our coachman told us; and with fresh cattle he should make up for lost time.

'But yet you see, sir,' he said to me, 'there are no four horses on this road that can beat these 'ere for pluck and go; and now look at 'em, that is if you can see 'em, for it's got precious dark this last few minutes.'

Our horses, as if with one consent, stopped suddenly, and appeared very uneasy, and the leaders attempted to turn round, which was the more extraordinary, as the next stage was within so short a distance, and which of

course they knew. The guard thought he heard a confused noise like howling of dogs and shouting—very distant, he said. Every one thought it must be very distant indeed, as no one else heard any sound except that made by the wind. All seemed wrapped in the stillness and darkness of the winter night. After another careful examination of the horses by coachman and guard, they were, by dint of much coaxing, induced to start again, but at no better pace than a walk. Shortly afterwards, one of the passengers remarked that the wind, which had hitherto been blowing from the south-east, had suddenly veered to the south-west, and that, if this continued, we might expect a thaw. Our horses, as if in some way affected by this change, broke into a trot, and we began to congratulate ourselves that we were now getting clear from our state of bewilderment, when, on coming to the brow of a steep hill, the drag was put on, and the horses brought to a walk, and we commenced to descend. At the bottom of this declivity, which was about a furlong in length, ran a small stream, now hard frozen, and on the opposite side the road again rose sharply. Our weather-wise friend said that our hopes of a thaw might be given up, for the wind had now shifted back again to the old quarter. This was when we were rather more than half-way down the hill, and went near to be the cause of a disaster to us, for our leaders again endeavoured to turn back, as they did a short time before; but the guard was quickly at their heads, and by leading and pulling, and with judicious touches of the whip, we got safely to the bottom, where we pulled up to remove the drag before ascending the opposite hill. On both sides of the road hereabout were thick fir plantations, and the darkness was intense, relieved only by the coach-lamps, which in those days were not very brilliant.

The coachman and guard, assisted by two of the passengers, now took out the horses for a more thorough inspection of the harness, pole, splinter-bar, &c., before starting up the hill, when we were startled by the sound of horses being ridden furiously down the hill through the darkness in front of us—we were drawn up close to the 'near' side of the road—and in a moment a riderless horse galloped past us; and close behind, a second horse with the shafts of a vehicle still attached; and we all then heard the howling of dogs only a short distance in our front. Our horses now seemed as if mad, and having been detached from the coach and from each other, they quickly became unmanageable, and broke away from those who held them, and were immediately lost in the darkness.

We now heard numerous long-drawn howls, proceeding apparently from a number of animals rushing down the hill towards us. Those who were in the road quickly clambered up into their places on the coach, and the guard handled the blunderbuss with which the coach was always 'armed.' However, the darkness was too black for us to see much; but the howling of the rapidly approaching brutes, which every one now felt could not be dogs, sent a cold shudder through us. Just as they were upon us, the moon shone through a rift in the clouds, and we quite plainly saw six large gray wolves rushing past in full cry after the horses. We

were stupefied with astonishment; how this could be, what to think, what to do, we knew not.

After some time and talk, it was agreed that we should leave the coach and walk, carrying the mail-bags, to the next stage, at a small village inn about two miles ahead. This we did, keeping together, and it was fortunate that there were no women-passengers, the coachman going first with the lantern, and the guard bringing up the rear with the blunderbuss. On reaching the top of the hill, we came upon a broken-down wagon in the middle of the road; and on making an inspection with our lantern, we found it to be the remains of a large van belonging to a travelling menagerie ('wild beast show,' in those days). The large hindmost doors were open, and on the sides of this van was painted the word 'Wolves.' This accounted partially, but not fully, for our night's adventure. On making further search, we found a man lying in a ditch by the side of the road some fifty yards from the van, grievously torn and insensible, but alive. One of our passengers happened to be a doctor; and under his directions, with such attention as could be given on the spot, and with the help of stimulants, he came to himself in about a quarter of an hour. He told us that he was in sole charge of the van and six wolves, his company being short-handed through illness; that in consequence of an accident, he had started from their last halting-place about ten hours after the rest of the company; that the wolves, perhaps from cold and hunger, were very restless for a considerable time before they escaped (hence the reason of our highly-bred horses, with their instinctive dread of wolves, and their acute scent favoured by the direction of the wind, refusing to approach nearer to the van, far away on the road before them); that he entered the 'keeper's compartment' of the van to see that all was safe, when one of the largest of the animals made a great spring, breaking the old and rusty bars of the cage; this liberated the whole of the wolves; and to save himself, he was obliged to unbolt the outer doors and run for his life. Two of the wolves fastened on him, and would, no doubt, have soon made short work of him, had it not been that his horses in their terror broke away down the hill with loud snorting and neighing, whereupon the two wolves left him, and joined the others in pursuit of the horses. He remembered nothing more, and must have been insensible until we discovered him.

We carried the poor fellow to the village to which we were going; and he was afterwards taken on to Salisbury for better surgical attention. The fire and light of the inn were very welcome after the cold and darkness of the journey. Our horses did not fall a prey to the wolves; but the shaft-horse of the van was killed by them, and partly devoured. The whole countryside turned out with all kinds of weapons, from guns down to heavy sticks, for the destruction of the wolves, which, however, we afterwards heard had committed some havoc in the sheepfolds before the last of them succumbed to a farm-labourer's well-handled pitchfork, a week after his escape.

We were not long permitted to enjoy the comfort

of our inn, for the coach was quickly brought up to the door with a fresh team, with which our Jehu certainly did his best to redeem his promise of making up for lost time.

AT TREVENNA COTTAGE.

BY T. W. SPEIGHT.

A STORY IN EIGHT CHAPTERS.—CHAP. V.

BETWEEN Thursday and Monday, no telegram or further communication of any kind reached Trevenna Cottage from Mr Saverne. Accordingly, on the afternoon of the latter day, Captain Avory hired a horse and wagonette from the *Crown Hotel* and drove over to Mumpston Junction to meet his cousin. That the captain was nervous and ill at ease, need scarcely be said, and he wished fervently that the next few hours were safely tided over. He had nerved himself with brandy before setting out on his journey; and his first proceeding, after reaching the station, was to make his way to the refreshment counter.

At eight o'clock to the minute, Bosy Groote knocked cautiously at the back-door of Trevenna Cottage, and was at once admitted by Mrs Avory. The two servants had been paid their wages and sent away earlier in the day. Mrs Avory installed Bosy in the kitchen; and after providing him with sundry refreshments and telling him that he was at liberty to smoke, she left him to his own devices.

The train by which Mr Saverne travelled was only a few minutes late in its arrival at Mumpston. Captain Avory stood on the platform, a nervous tremor affecting him from head to foot, as he watched the passengers alight. Presently there emerged from the crowd a face and figure which he recognised at the first glance, changed though they were in some measure by the passage of a dozen years. His heart gave a great throb as he went forward quickly with a white face and lips which twitched involuntarily behind the smile of welcome they now wore. A moment later and the two cousins had gripped each other's hand.

Edward Saverne, who was several years younger than the captain, was a thin, slightly built but wiry-looking man, with a sun-embrowned complexion, and a plentiful tangle of brown beard and moustache. He had a pleasant smile and kindly eyes. He was one of those men whom other men—and women too, for that matter—seem to take to and like instinctively, without waiting to ask themselves whether or not it is wise on their part to do so.

'You are scarcely a bit altered,' said the captain to his cousin as they stood for a moment full in the light of the station lamps. 'You are browner, and perhaps a trifle broader across the shoulders; but I should have known you again anywhere.'

'Time's finger doesn't seem to have scored you

very heavily in passing,' remarked the other smilingly. 'Yet, now I scan you more closely, you look pale and careworn—nervous even, and that is worse than all. What's amiss? Nothing wrong at home, I hope? Or perhaps it's only your liver that's out of order? That poor liver has much to answer for.'

The captain laughed a little dismally. 'There's nothing the matter with me that I am aware of,' he said; 'except that of late I've been suffering somewhat from insomnia. As you say, there's no doubt it's that plaguy liver.'

Five minutes later, they had lighted their cigars and were bowling in the wagonette rapidly along the road to Boscombe, Mr Saverne sitting on the box by his cousin, with his one portmanteau behind.

It was a dark moonless night, with scarcely a breath of air stirring. The few stars that were visible twinkled faintly, as if they were farther off than usual. The two men as they drove along had much to talk about; but, truth to tell, the conversation was mainly kept up by Mr Saverne, for, despite all his efforts, the captain's thoughts would wander from the subject in hand, and busy themselves anent a certain task which must imperatively be got through before dawn. It was therefore with a divided mind that he listened to his cousin's explanations of the reasons which had induced him to return so unexpectedly to England. By-and-by, a turn of the road showed them the few scattered lights of Boscombe twinkling like glow-worms on the slope of the hill; and a few minutes later, they drew up at the gate of Trevenna Cottage.

The door was wide open, a lamp shone in the hall, and Mrs Avory was waiting at the threshold to receive them. There had been no love lost between her and Edward Saverne in years gone by. He had not liked her, and she had not liked him, and each of them knew it. But all this had happened years ago; and when a long-lost kinsman returns from over the seas, old animosities ought to be quenched, at least for the time being, and a home-welcome extended to the wanderer. Accordingly, Mrs Avory, in her usual quiet, undemonstrative way, was full of cordiality, and in the course of three or four minutes, almost succeeded in making her guest believe that she was really glad to see him again. She ushered him into the dining-room, where a cheerful fire was burning, with a small round table in front of it laid for two persons.

'There must be no formality, Edward, I beg,' she said. 'Never mind your dress. It is only a bit of supper I've got ready for you and Lucius. We are primitive folk here, and we never dine later than five. You must not mind if I wait on you myself this evening. The fact is,' she added confidentially, 'I had to send away both my servants this morning at a moment's notice. The usual thing, of course—dishonesty. It was impossible to keep them. So we are all alone to-night; but you won't mind that for once, I daresay. I have a cook coming on trial in the morning.'

The captain, meanwhile, had taken the horse and trap round to the stable at the back of the Cottage, having previously arranged at the hotel that he should keep them till next day. There he found Bosy Groote, who proceeded to

groom and feed the horse. A brief colloquy ensued between the two men, after which the captain went indoors and joined his cousin in the dining-room.

Mrs Avory had provided an appetising little supper, to which her kinsman did not fail to do justice; but it was only by an effort that the captain contrived to swallow a few morsels. Of this, however, Mr Saverne saw nothing. Mrs Avory plied him with so many questions, and had so many things to tell him on her own account, that he had no attention left for anything else. 'Really,' he thought to himself, 'Louisa has improved vastly since we last met. I had no idea she could make herself so agreeable.'

When supper was over and Mrs Avory had cleared the table, the two men drew their chairs closer to the fire, for the night seemed suddenly to have grown chilly.

'What would you like to drink? A little hot punch, or what?' asked Avory at the moment his wife re-entered the room.

Edward Saverne hesitated. He was an abstemious man both by temperament and inclination; but to-night he certainly did feel as if a little warm punch would be grateful to him.

'I think I know of something that Edward would like still better,' remarked Mrs Avory sweetly. 'Although so long ago, I have not forgotten that he used to have, what he will excuse me for calling, a little weakness for mulled port—especially, I think, when it had been made by me.—What say you, Edward, to a little mulled port to-night, concocted after the old recipe?'

Edward laughed. 'I think it a very happy suggestion,' he said; 'and I hope to find that your old skill has not deserted you. I tried my hand at it once or twice in Australia, but the memory is a painful one.'

'Punch for me,' said the captain with a laugh. 'I call mulled port a mollicoddle drink, though Lou certainly does know how to brew it.' Speaking thus, he handed his cigar case to his cousin and then took a weed himself.

A tiny copper kettle was singing merrily over a spirit-lamp on the sideboard; and all ingredients being at hand, Mrs Avory at once set about mixing a large tumbler of port-negus for her cousin and one of grog for her husband.

'Try that,' she said as she handed Mr Saverne's glass to him with a smile.

He took a long appreciative sip at it; then he nodded and smiled and said: 'Your fingers have not forgotten their cunning, Louisa. It's a tippie fit for the gods.'

'One request,' she said—'don't neglect to drink it while it's hot.'

The captain was in the act of striking a match at the moment his cousin lifted the glass to his lips, but apparently he forgot to apply it to his cigar, and allowed it to burn itself out in his fingers. Before striking another, he took a long pull at his tumbler, and Mr Saverne could not help noticing how his hand shook as it held the glass.

Mrs Avory opened the folding-doors which gave access to the drawing-room, and seating herself at the piano, she began playing some slow, dreamy melody in a minor key, while the two

men went on with their talk in the adjoining room.

Up to this point, Captain Avory's share in the conversation had been little more than a nominal one; but now he seemed at once to brighten up, and plunged into some reminiscences of his boyish days in which he and his cousin had been mixed up together. The more voluble the captain grew, the more taciturn his cousin became. The room was cosy, the fire was cheerful, his easy-chair was soft and comfortable, and his cigar was of a choice brand. Somehow, as he sipped and sipped again at his negus, the less inclined he became for talking, and the more inclined he became to listen to Lucius, to whose voice the notes of the piano formed a sort of subdued rhythmic accompaniment. Gradually and imperceptibly, he began to lose all sense of time and place. Twice he caught himself nodding, and drew himself up with a start; but the influence that was upon him was too powerful to be long resisted. For a minute or two longer, Avory's voice droned in his ears, but without conveying any more sense to him than the droning of a wasp would have done; for a minute or two longer, he heard the liquid tinkle of the piano like faint, vague music coming from afar; then his head sunk gently back on the cushions of his chair, and he remembered nothing more. The narcotic administered by Mrs Avory in the mulled wine had worked its intended effect.

'He's off!' whispered the captain to his wife a minute later.

Mrs Avory came forward and looked closely at the sleeping man. After carefully testing the action of his pulse, she lifted his lids one after the other and examined the pupils of his eyes.

'Yes, I think he will do,' she said to her husband, with that strange sinister smile which sometimes lighted up her face. 'You see, my dear, that I was a doctor's daughter to some purpose. You had better go and rouse up Bosy Groote and get everything in readiness as quickly as possible.'

The captain went without a word, his face as white as a sheet. He was dreadfully agitated, for he could not help reflecting that it was just possible his cousin might never wake again in this world. He found Bosy asleep on the rug in front of the kitchen fire; but he sprang to his feet at a touch, and at once proceeded to the stable to harness the horse; while Avory inducted himself into a rough overcoat, tied a muffler round his neck, and put on his head a travelling cap which he rarely used. Bosy returned in the course of a few minutes; and then he and the captain proceeded to carry out to the wagonette a number of articles which had previously been placed in readiness by Mrs Avory. This done, Avory, followed by Bosy, went back to the dining-room.

Two minutes later, Mr Saverne, wrapped in a blanket, had been safely deposited on a long horse-hair cushion at the bottom of the wagonette, with an old blue cloak of the captain's thrown lightly over him. Bosy then got into the vehicle and shut the door, and Avory mounted to the box.

Scarcely a word had hitherto been spoken by any of the three. Mrs Avory now said to her

husband: 'I shall sit up till you return. You will get back as quickly as possible?'

'You may rely upon that,' was the answer.—'You don't think there's any likelihood that the jolting will waken him?'

'None whatever; you may make your mind easy on that score. An earthquake would scarcely waken him for the next four hours.'

Two minutes later, they had started on their way to Hoogies. Midnight struck as they wound slowly up the hill. Not a light was anywhere to be seen. Darkness and silence lay all about them. As soon as they had got fairly into the road which skirts the crown of the hill, their progress became a little accelerated, although it was still necessary to drive carefully, in order that the unconscious man might be shaken as little as possible. At length they reached that part of the road where it becomes narrower, and dips abruptly towards the shore, and is shut in on either hand by gloomy masses of foliage. At this point the captain was obliged to come to a stand; he could not see his hand before him. Bosy, who knew the road almost as well by night as by day, suggested the advisability of leading the horse down the hill. To this Avory agreed; so Bosy alighted, and down they went slowly till at length they reached the end of the plantation and emerged on to the level road by the shore. It was necessary to skirt the extreme end of the plantation, so as to reach the sands, and then to go back along them for a short distance, and in that way arrive at the house.

At length they reached the fire-blackened ruin which was their destination. During the whole journey from Trevenna Cottage to Hoogies, they had neither met nor overtaken any one. As soon as they drew up, the captain threw the reins over the horse's back and alighted. Bosy went forward into the house, and presently returned with a horn lantern, in which a candle burned dimly.

'Get up into the trap and see that he is all right,' said Avory in a hoarse whisper.

Bosy, lantern in hand, obeyed. The captain scarcely breathed while the brief examination was being made. 'He's all right—as fast as a rock,' said Bosy as he stepped down.

Captain Avory breathed again; and producing his spirit-flask, he partook of a copious dram, and then gave another to his companion. There still remained much to be done.

The two men went indoors, and, instructed by Avory, Bosy lighted a couple of candles, which he stuck in empty bottles on the chimney-piece. At that hour of the night they had no fear of any one spying on them from without. Bosy's next act was to clear away everything from the middle of the floor. That done, he crossed to the wide old fireplace, and thrusting one arm inside it nearly to his shoulder, he felt for, and found an iron ring attached to a chain, which he pulled down by some exertion, and then fixed it in that position by means of a hook firmly imbedded in the brickwork of the chimney. The moment he pulled the ring, a certain plank in the floor sank about two inches, and then slid out of sight beneath the plank next to it. In the fissure thus revealed were two more iron rings about two feet from each other. Bosy now

came forward, and kneeling on one knee, took hold of one of the rings, while the captain took hold of the other. Pulling thus together, they gradually lifted up a large square trap-door in the middle of the floor, and then fixed it in an upright position by means of a couple of stanchions. At their feet now gaped a huge black cavity or cellar, hollowed out of the soft friable rock on which the house was built. In the old smuggling days, this had been the receptacle and hiding-place for many a 'run' of contraband goods. After his mother's death, there was no one living but Bosy who knew the secret of the hiding-place; but to Captain Avory, when the latter happened to call one day, he had revealed it as being a matter of little moment. It was nothing now but a curious memento of a state of things which had died out long years ago.

As the captain gazed into the yawning cavern, it looked so like a huge grave that he could not repress a shudder. And yet it was to this living tomb that he was about to consign his cousin, who had never done him an injury! Avory was not so hardened in ill-doing as not to feel acutely the turpitude of the deed on which he was bent; but he was as a man who is being dragged forward by the hand of an inexorable Fate, which he is powerless to resist, and from which there is no escape. He had gone so far on the road he had chosen, that no turning back was possible for him. Go forward he must at any and every cost. He shrank back with an inward groan.

Bosy, meanwhile, was bringing in a number of packages from the wagonette. When there were no more to bring, he took a candle in his hand, and by means of a loose wooden ladder, he descended through the trap-door into the cellar, which extended under nearly the whole of the kitchen. It was as dry and as free from damp as on the day it had been hollowed out of the sandstone. It was ventilated by means of a small shaft, which opened into the chimney above. Some preparations for the reception of his guest had already been made by Bosy. His rude truckle bedstead was arranged in one corner; and the empty cask had been brought down to serve as a table, together with one of the three-legged stools, in lieu of a chair; while in another corner stood a large earthen pitcher filled with water.

The captain now proceeded to hand down to Bosy the articles removed by the latter from the wagonette. These comprised candles, a candlestick, matches, a small spirit-lamp and kettle, sundry provisions, a bottle of brandy and another of port, together with a few articles of crockery.

'Looks like a pallis fit for a king—blest if it don't!' whispered Bosy, as he glanced round it admiringly when the last article had been handed to him. 'Wouldn't care tuppence if I was shut up here myself.'

As soon as Bosy had ascended from the cellar, the captain and he held a consultation. They had forgotten to bring with them the rope needful to assist them in lowering the sleeping man into the cellar. Bosy's quick wits assisted him in solving the difficulty. 'There's the reins,' he said; 'why can't we make use of them?'

'The very thing!' exclaimed Avory. 'Get them at once.'

As soon as Bosy had fetched the reins, he and the captain proceeded to lift Mr Saverne—still lying on the long cushion—out of the wagonette and deposit him on the kitchen floor. The reins were then passed under the cushion, one at the head, the other at the feet, after which the conspirators proceeded slowly and carefully to lower the cushion and its burden into the depths below. This safely accomplished, the two men descended one after the other, the reins were removed, and Mr Saverne was then lifted on to the truckle bedstead. The blanket was still round him in which he had been wrapped at the Cottage; and a second one was now laid over him. A fresh candle was lighted, and after that, there was nothing more to be done. Avory bent over his cousin for a moment; the latter was breathing heavily but regularly—it was the breathing of a man in a deep dreamless sleep. Never in his life had Captain Avory loathed himself as he did at that moment.

Two minutes later, the ladder had been drawn up, the trap-door had been lowered, and the mysterious plank had slid back into its groove. There was no trace visible of the deed which had just been enacted.

Captain Avory, who shook in every limb, fortified himself and Bosy with another dram from his flask; then he said: 'In order that there may be no blunder on your part, I will again refresh your memory with regard to what still remains for you to do. Now, listen carefully. As soon as you hear the gentleman below stirring, but not till then, you will leave here without letting him in any way have a knowledge of your presence. Should you not hear him stirring by noon to-morrow, or rather to-day, for it's now past one o'clock, you will hasten at once to the Cottage and inform me of that fact. But, as a matter of course, he will waken up long before that time. The moment you hear him move, you will steal away, and not come near the place till midnight on Wednesday. The noise you will then make will attract his attention, and he will at once endeavour to attract yours. When he has succeeded in doing this, you will open the trap-door in the same way that it was opened to-night; you will lower the ladder, and you will help him to ascend. You will profess to be as much surprised as himself at finding him there. You have been away in another part of the country for several days, and know nothing whatever of the affair. Who can possibly have shut him up in the place where you have found him!'

Bosy, who had been following the captain's instructions with eager nods and smiles, now broke out with a shrill 'Ho, ho, ho!' in which there seemed to lurk an echo of madness. 'I'm fly, cap'en, I'm fly,' he cried. 'Ah! I fancy I can see the gent's face when he comes blinking up the ladder, and wants to know where he is! But, as you say, cap'en, who could possibly have put him there? Ho, ho, ho!' Then, with a sudden change of tone, he said: 'But you promised me ten more bright yellow boys, cap'en, when the job was done—don't forget that!'

'I have not forgotten. Here is the money;' and with that Avory counted ten sovereigns into Bosy's lean claw-like hand.

Five minutes later, Captain Avory had set out on his way back to Trevenna Cottage.

THE TREATMENT OF CONVICTS AND DISCHARGED PRISONERS.

AMONG the many efforts of Christian philanthropists to alleviate the misery and distress of the unfortunate, few are more worthy of public support and sympathy than the Societies which seek to assist those unfortunates who have been led astray from the straight way, to return to the path of honesty and integrity—no easy matter, when surrounded by every temptation, and no kind friends to receive them on discharge from prison. But strange to say, some of the discharged prisoners themselves seem to have a prejudice against the very Societies organised for their benefit; and it is for the purpose of dispelling such illusions that a correspondent who has made strict investigation into the matter has sent us some reliable information from personal observation.

About six weeks before a convict is to be discharged, he is asked if he wishes to book for one of the Aid Societies. On his deciding on one, he is notified in due time that they will receive him. His gratuities are paid over to the Society; and he can either have his clothing from the prison or from the Society, which is a matter of importance to the prisoners; so (says our correspondent) I purpose taking them and the reader to the Royal Society in Aid of Discharged Prisoners, 39 Charing Cross, London. The prisoners are taken from the prison in a cab, and on arriving at the chambers of the Society, are shown into a room, where a substantial breakfast is set before them, consisting of a large plate of ham with *white* bread—which seems to fill the men with ecstasy, after what they call the 'sawdust' bread they have been used to—and unlimited coffee. After doing justice to these things, they are called singly into the secretary's room, where they are interviewed by a gentleman of the Committee as to their plans and the best way in which the Society can assist them.

These are gentlemen who are in high social positions, who attend personally one day each in his turn; and now and then the President, the Duke of Westminster, goes and talks to the men. They are next taken by a clerk to some upper rooms, well stocked with clothing of all kinds. Those who get their things here, on leaving the prison, are supplied with a suit of clothes, also one cotton shirt, one flannel shirt, with flannel drawers, one pair of socks, and a necktie. The suit is only lent; but the other things, the person who receives them keeps.

Several men were fitted during the writer's visit, and the secretary kindly gave me a bill of one of their outfits. I assert positively that no one could ever dream where that man had got his clothes, or where he had just come from, which cannot be said of those who get their clothes from the prison. The following is the bill of the outfit I have mentioned: Tweed suit, 17s. 6d.; two coloured Oxford shirts, 4s.;

two pair of stockings, 1s. 8d.; black silk necktie, 1s. 3d.; braces, 1s.; serviceable hat, 2s. 9d.; boots, 7s.—Total, £1, 15s. 2d. As this man's outfit came to two shillings less than the sum allowed, he took, besides, two pair of socks and a nice muffler. If this outfit had been purchased in the shops, it would have cost considerably more. After being clothed, the man was taken again to the secretary. If he wanted employment, he was supplied with a note to certain employers, and sufficient money for his wants till he called again. But if he was going down the country, he was told what time to be at the station. An agent would meet him there, and give him his railway ticket and a sovereign.

There seems to be an idea that going to the Society means getting 'lagged' again; which report has been raised by men who have been reconvicted, and who declare the Society to be in league with the police. When I hinted this to the secretary, he indignantly repudiated it, and declared that the police have several times accused the Society of withholding information which would have enabled them to capture certain men. But, as the secretary observed, both his duty and inclination prompt him to assist men to get into honourable positions and get an honest living.

Another idea among prisoners is, that unless they have some gratuities to pay into the Society's hands, the latter won't receive them. I looked through the Society's books, and saw a number of cases where men without money and unable to find work had been supported by the Society for several weeks. I spoke to two men who had been treated in this manner, and they were warm in expressing their gratitude for the kindness they had received. Another man came in during my visit to ask for more money. He said he had been to all the places indicated in the note, but could not get any work. I think the fellow never wanted any work; and if he happens to get reconvicted, he is just the one to set the prisoners against the Society by his false statements.

The secretary showed me a letter received that morning from a man he had sent to New York some weeks previously with a letter of introduction to an agent there, who got him employment with an English farmer eighty miles from New York, at five dollars a week and board and lodging. He lived and had his meals with the family. He spoke with rapture of the kindness he met with. His master being a teetotaler, he became one also, and hoped soon to save enough to take a farm of his own! This is one of many cases where they have been the means of assisting men to regain their lost positions; yet many prisoners persist in believing the reports of wretches who seem incapable of speaking the truth. The secretary, Major Tillbrook, has invited governors and chaplains to come and examine his books, &c.; but very few of them have been zealous enough to take the trouble, so he trusts to time to prove whether he has conscientiously done his duty or not. As for myself, I can heartily recommend all prisoners to book for the Royal Society, 39 Charing Cross, and get their clothing from them. Those who sincerely wish to turn to the path of honesty

will receive every encouragement and assistance from the Society. I would also beg to call the attention of the wealthy to this good cause, and ask them to promote it by their donations.

On the subject of gratuities to convicts, there has been so much written of late years, that any addition may seem superfluous; but, as much of what I have read on the subject could only have been obtained from a secondary source, and as I have had unsurpassed opportunities for several years of observing and studying the subject in all its bearings, I venture to hope my remarks may throw fresh light on the matter, and call the attention of the authorities to the subject.

I am convinced that the only true principles of criminal reformation are these: (1) To create and develop self-respect; and (2) to create and encourage habits of industry. Now, in practice, the very reverse happens. It is, as a rule, through lacking these two qualities that men become criminals; and seeing that to be the case, it cannot be expected that habits of industry are to be created by setting them to work which they may be unfitted for and by giving them no interest in their labour. Under such conditions, every artifice is resorted to, to evade or scamp their work; whereas, by giving them a fair percentage on the value of their labour, it would cease to be repulsive, and they would gradually acquire a liking for it. As they saw the money accumulating on their credit sheet, they would be stimulated to further exertion by the prospect of being able on their release to start themselves in the way of getting an honest living. Habits of industry, to be lasting, must be spontaneous, not forced. The men in the convict prisons have a certain task to perform, which, as a rule, is an easy one. The same amount of work outside would not support a man. As no one likes to work more than he is forced to do, especially at work he gets little or nothing for, the consequence is, that after a number of years of easy work, it has become a settled habit. On his release, being unable to do more work, he cannot compete with other working-men; and unless he is a man of more than ordinary virtue and resolution, he soon gets disheartened, gives up the struggle, and relapses into crime again; whereupon he is denounced as an incorrigible scoundrel, and gets sent back to prison, to have every hope blasted of being able to raise himself to an honest position. All his heroic struggles against adverse circumstances are ignored; and in the bitterness of his heart, he vows eternal enmity to all laws and society. There you have a man able and willing to commit any crime; one who reflects on the number of years of his life and labour he has been robbed of. He is thereby stimulated by revenge, as well as by the desire to make up at somebody's expense what he considers he has been robbed of.

The longer a man is kept under these conditions, the less are his chances of extricating himself; for, under the so-called 'Prevention of Crimes Act,' a man who has been twice convicted of crime is at the mercy of every policeman who may owe him a grudge; or who, knowing his power over him, may be base enough to misrepresent some little act, such, for instance, as seeing him in certain places where other people may be with impunity. In the case of this man, some sinister motive is alleged and believed, and the

unfortunate creature is sent to twelve months' hard labour; so that these so-called Prevention of Crimes Acts are the means of committing crimes, by occasionally sending innocent men to prison. These Acts are unjust, and utterly inadequate to prevent crime. I assert that the majority of men who get reconvicted, would not have been so, had they had the means, on their release, of a fair start. This can best be done by allowing the prisoner to use his powers of application while in prison to earn by his labour enough to start him in life again; or to emigrate, which is the best thing he can do.

The present system of giving gratuities is unfair and unequal. Convicts doing penal servitude have to pass through the following classes, namely, probation class, one year, of which nine months are spent in separate confinement, during which they receive no gratuity or remission. If they are not reported for misconduct, they go into the third class, and get one shilling a month for twelve months. They next pass into the second class, and get one shilling and sixpence a month for twelve months; after which they enter the first class, and receive two shillings and sixpence a month for twelve months, until they have earned three pounds altogether. By the time they have earned this money they will have done four years; but a man under sentence of five years only does about three years and eleven months, so that he cannot earn the three pounds; yet, provided he has done nine months in the first class, he is eligible to be recommended for a further gratuity not exceeding two pounds; whilst those under sentences over five years can be recommended for an extra three pounds—to get which, he must be in the special class; and to obtain which, he must pass through the first class without any reports. Now, here is the unfairness. One man is doing ten years, is working in the shoemakers' shop, and his labour is worth fourteen or fifteen shillings a week; another man doing five years is closing boot uppers, and his labour is worth about three shillings and sixpence a week; yet, if he has passed nine months in the first class, he gets five pounds; whilst the ten years' man—who has to pass over four years in the first class, and may probably get reported in that time, for, say, speaking to another prisoner, which will keep him from getting into the special class—on discharge will only get three pounds. Even a fifteen or twenty years' man will get no more.

One would think that in making pecuniary awards, the chief thing to be considered would be what a man has earned by his labour; yet practically, that is not considered of any account, for a lazy schemer, who will perhaps be picking oakum or other equally unpaying work, and earning about fourpence a day, providing he does not get reported—and such schemers know how to fawn round the officers, and generally escape being reported—then gets the full gratuity of six pounds. Where is any fairness or justice in such a system? It only encourages laziness and scheming, and offers no inducement to a man to take any interest in his work or try to improve his craft. The consequence is, none of them do what they could or would do, if they were allowed something on all they did.

I ask any reader of this paper to imagine him-

self through some sudden act, intentional or accidental, sentenced to twenty years, perhaps in the bloom and vigour of manhood; and after doing fifteen years, is liberated, when he finds he has nearly forgotten his trade. He is weak, and wants good nourishment; the best years of his life have been wasted; and he has done no good to himself or anybody. Reflect, reader, what a feeling such treatment would raise in your heart. Would it not be one of bitter resentment? I know of many men doing ten, fifteen, or twenty years for striking officers in the army or navy! These men are honest men, and never been in prison before, as a rule. They were tried by courts-martial, composed of the brother-officers of the officers they had struck. I venture to suggest that courts-martial should not be allowed to give such sentences. I submit that if a man commits a crime, he must be punished; and in many cases the judges will acknowledge they give long sentences, not so much for the crime committed, as to make it a long time before he can commit it again. Now, the government declares it seeks not so much to punish a criminal as to reform him; then why not let the earlier portion of his sentence be made a punishment, while the crime is fresh in his memory, and the latter part be applied to his reformation? This can be best effected by giving him facilities for acquiring habits of industry, by letting him earn money all through his sentence—which will place him in a position to help himself by his own means, instead of seeking, and not finding, help from others.

I think the fairness and justice of these remarks will commend themselves to all humane persons; and I trust may meet with the generous consideration of the authorities.

A WINTER VISIT TO FONTAINEBLEAU.

In the middle of a winter exceptionally severe, my friend came over to Paris to pay me a long expected visit, having seized the only opportunity which a temporary release from home-duties afforded him of leaving England. He was very desirous of seeing Fontainebleau; and although it was unfortunate that he was unable to choose a more propitious season, I determined that not even this opportunity should be lost of paying the place a visit. So off we started to the *gare de Lyon*, and were soon rolling along through the bitterly cold air. Inside the carriage we were cosy enough, having provided ourselves with ample coats and rugs, and having the benefit of two large foot-warmers, which on French railways never belie their name, and which in this instance were entirely at our disposal as the only occupants of the compartment.

But what a picture of starving cold outside! Through the snow, which had been lying three weeks or more on the ground, nothing appeared save the skeleton trees standing like ghostly mutes at Nature's funeral, shrouded in the far distance by that steel gray pall to which such weather owes the name of 'black frost.' The windows were covered with a sheet of sparkling ice, which we rubbed away many times with our

hands; but almost before we had time to look through, the space was again frozen over. We were not sorry on such a day to walk the distance—some two miles—which separates the station of Fontainebleau from the town; and by the time we arrived in front of the handsome railing shutting off the large court of the château from the street, all the stiffness and cold of the journey had disappeared. But if the walk had restored our circulation, it had also served to remind us that it was breakfast-time, and a *déjeuner* served in the dining-room of one of the hotels opposite the palace, found us sharp set. Here our excellent hostess, knowing that *ces messieurs* must be dreadfully cold, lit us a splendid fire, and drew our table close up to it, so that we enjoyed our meal in warmth and comfort. Thus fortified, we put on our coats, and went across to the *Cour des Adieux* to find a guide. Very loth was the guardian whose turn it was to accompany us to leave the warm room where he and his companions were seated round a large porcelain stove. But having at last unmistakably convinced himself that it was his turn, he buttoned up his coat over his scarlet waistcoat, and with a shudder and a sigh, came out, crossed the court, and proceeded to introduce us under the great horse-shoe staircase into the château.

Let us pause here for a moment and carry ourselves back seventy years. See that short pale man who speaks from the staircase to that throng of soldiers who stand round with drooping heads and moistened eyes, moved beyond speech, as his words of farewell fall upon their ears. Now he ceases, the fire dies from his eyes, and the veterans throng round for a last look, through their unwonted tears, at their beloved leader, ere he turns to go from them, as they think, for ever. But less than a year has passed when the whirligig of events brings him there again, and cheer after cheer rings through the yard from the dense throng of troops, as, with flushed cheek and sparkling eye, he speaks to them of triumph. Off go bearskin and shako, and the throats of a thousand veterans welcome him.

'*Par ici, messieurs,*' says the guardian; and back to the tomb rush the martial shades, nothing left but the snow-covered yard and staircase. The name of the place—*La Cour des Adieux* (the place of parting)—alone perpetuates the episode.

Now at last we are inside that famous palace, a monument of French sovereigns from Louis IX. to Napoleon III. There are many who take but a languid interest in the palace of Fontainebleau. For these, it is a mere collection of beautiful rooms and furniture, with which it is necessary to be acquainted as a topic of conversation, but for which one visit amply suffices. When you have seen it once, you have seen it enough, whereas the beauties of the forest never pall; nay, the more often you visit it, the more beauties you discover therein. But after willingly conceding to the forest all the beauty which it incontestably

possesses, the student of the past must confess that it is difficult to tire even of the palace. It is a place so teeming with associations and memories, that no one, unless an entire stranger to the romance of history, can fail to tread with pleasure, not once but many times, its silent halls. Other royal palaces may be more imposing both in external appearance and magnificence of interior; Versailles, with its vast frontage, and the size and splendour of its rooms, doubtless leaves all others far behind. But none can vie with Fontainebleau for richness of historical incident, nor can any call up so vividly the past glories of the French court.

We enter first the chapel with its quaint side-pews, whence the ladies of the court and nobles, separated by their white-flowered panels from the common crowd, witnessed the royal baptisms and marriages, so many of which have been solemnised there. On next to the suite of rooms occupied by Napoleon I., who of all French sovereigns most loved Fontainebleau. See the table where he reluctantly signed his abdication, and the mark where he dashed his knife into it, in impatient rage. Further on, the bath-room of Marie Antoinette, the panels of which are of looking-glass, painted with festoons of flowers, and as fresh as if of yesterday. Round the ceiling, hanging from it, is a cornice of small flowers in Sèvres porcelain. These exquisitely beautiful decorations were brought from Versailles, where they originally embellished a room in the palace of the Grand Trianon. Not less luxurious is the bedroom of the same hapless queen. The coverlet and curtains of the bed, the chairs, the panels of the walls, are all in silk of the same pattern, tasteful festoons of flowers, worked on a light blue ground, with the queen's initials in the centre. Not all the lavish care of numerous succeeding owners has prevented the coverlet and curtains from becoming frayed and worn-eaten; but the hangings still remain perfect masterpieces of the Lyons looms, whence they issued a century ago. The embroidered initials call up sad recollections, so let us go on to the adjoining *Salle du Conseil*, with its round green-covered table and chairs. Here, at this very table, under the warring First Empire, decisions were taken big with the fate of nations; and momentous councils were held under that Second Empire, whose motto was peace, though it, too, was often identified with war. Next comes the throne-room, separated from this by a wall many feet thick, painted dark blue, with gold *fleurs-de-lis*, a design which carries us back to the time of St Louis. On we go through rooms with elaborate ceilings and inlaid floors of corresponding design, some of which emanated from the artistic mind of the locksmithing Louis XVI., until we reach the library, a long low room, the favourite haunt of Napoleon III. Here he spent many hours in study and in arranging the books, some of which bear his name on the cover.

How can words be found to describe all the beauties of the succeeding rooms or the memories they recall! To do the latter would be to write an entire history of France. Here, over this chimney-piece, an equestrian statue in relief of Henri IV.; this is the study of Francis I.; in that room Louis XIII. was born: indeed, it would

seem that each room brings back a separate reign. Let us linger a few moments in the *Salle des Fêtes*, the ballroom of the palace, and endeavour to do justice to its beauties. Oak panels decorated with silver crescent and golden laurels, with which mingle the initials of Henri II. and Diana of Poitiers. A deep recess, with cushion seats in each of the many windows, where the ladies smile and flirt between the dances. The ceiling by that Italian, honoured, by long residence at the French court, with a French name, le Primatice. A portrait of the old master, painted by himself, goes down to posterity in one of the numerous figures which crowd the ceiling. When the court is tired of dancing, and the strains of the last minuet have died away from the musicians' gallery, the attendants wheel in supper tables from the doors at the other end. Where are now the balls and feasts, which then seemed never ending? Gone, alas, for ever! Bacchus and Terpsichore have joined hands, and fled with that extinct court which invoked their presence, never more to return. Yet now, fancy may picture the moonlight shining in upon the spectres of fair women and brave men, who pace together the stately minuet, while ghostly musicians play instruments which give forth no sound. Even in daylight, little imagination enables us to hear again the sound of music and laughter which re-echoed so often from old Primatice's ceiling, and to people once more that ancient hall with succeeding generations of rank and beauty.

Time passes, so we must fain pass on through the room where Pius VII. was held a prisoner during the First Empire. A very tolerable captivity, so far as comfort goes, in rooms with Cordovan leather hangings, Beauvais tapestry and frescoes. Under the glass cover of an inlaid table the signature of the pope in red ink is shown. Last of all the rooms before we come to the theatre is the curious *Galerie des Assiettes*, decorated—as its name implies—with plates screwed into oak panelling, each bearing a representation of a royal palace.

We are now only separated by a passage from the *Salle de Spectacle* or theatre, which must indeed have seen many famous 'spectacles,' comparatively modern though it is. Pull off one of the holland covers of the balcony seats, and look at the splendid golden silk with which it is covered. On the front row, on one side of the gangway, the seat of that unfortunate lady who still lives an exile amongst us; on the other, that of her departed husband. Below, in the pit, sat the officers; above, in boxes, decently separated by a gilded lattice from the effulgence of Empire, the servants of the palace. Behind the balcony are retiring-rooms for the ladies, with luxurious lounges and soft carpets. In this tiny space, the *comédiens ordinaires du roi* (or *de l'empereur*), bidden by royal command from their splendid house in the Rue Richelieu, performed in the presence of the court. The scenery remains untouched, as it was at the last performance held there, now nearly twenty years ago. The stage is only shown to those who have obtained a special permission, which we had not; but a little persuasion was sufficient to prevail upon the guardian to commit this slight breach of duty; and after assuring himself that no one was following, he produced a key, and let us in

through a small door, which he carefully locked after him. A novel experience it was to tread the boards of that stage, where so many celebrated actors had trod, and to look on the house with its holland-covered seats. We stayed so long wandering about the greenroom and peering into the dressing-rooms, that only a reminder from our guide that we were trespassers, drew us thence. He, however, was substantially rewarded, when at last he ushered us forth again, into the chilly air, and with a '*Bonjour, messieurs*,' hurried back to his warm corner by the stove.

Full as we were of the beauties of the palace, we felt that even at this period of the year our visit would not be complete until we had seen something of the forest; so, having still a little time to spare, we plunged at random into it. The bare trunks and snow-covered ground could only give the faintest idea of its summer splendour, and we were soon content to return and make our way homewards, after resting and marvelling a moment at its supernatural stillness and solitude.

Evil as were the ways of the old courts which had their home at Fontainebleau, the guest departing from this feast of beauty is fain to except them from the old adage, and believe that whereas the evil they did is interred with their bones, the good remains in the pictures, the statues, the tapestries, and all the thousand-and-one beauties of the palace, their united handiwork, incentives to the achievement of further artistic triumphs by posterity. Though the grave has closed upon the splendour of their lives, utter oblivion can never overtake them while this noble edifice remains their witness.

COQUETTE.

BY HUGH CONWAY.

BECAUSE her eyes to me and you
The brightest are and bluest,
Shall storms arise between us two,
The oldest friends and truest?
She smiles on me; my heart is light,
And yours is steeped in sorrow,
And yet the flower I gave to-night,
She'll throw to you to-morrow.
Coquette is she; so say with me:
'Let him who wins her wear her;
And fair—however fair she be,
There's many a lassie fairer.'

But if it hap, and well it may,
That each in vain has pleaded,
If all my songs are thrown away,
And all your sighs unheeded,
We'll vow ourselves no hermit's vows,
We'll cross no foaming billow,
We'll bind about our dialm brows
No wreaths of mournful willow;
But show, in spite of her disdain,
We yet can live without her;
And joining hands, we'll laugh again,
And think no more about her!

Printed and Published by W. & R. CHAMBERS, 47 Paternoster Row, LONDON, and 339 High Street, EDINBURGH.